



STATEMENT BY

Mr. Donovan Stanberry
Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Jamaica
on Agriculture and Rural Development
at the
16th Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable
Development

Mr. Chairman

Jamaica associates itself with the statement made yesterday by the distinguished representative of Antigua and Barbuda on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, as well as the statement just made by our colleague from Barbados on behalf of the AOSIS.

We would like to contribute to the debate on agriculture and rural development, with special reference to Jamaica. In Jamaica, agriculture and rural development are inextricably linked, as agriculture represents the dominant economic activity in rural areas supplemented by bauxite mining and tourism. Any effort at rural development therefore must be targeted primarily at agricultural development.

Interventions relating to the development of agriculture and agricultural productivity must take full cognisance of the structure and profile of the agricultural sector. The sector is dominated by small farmers, owning small plots of often marginal lands, illiterate, and often times without legal tenure.

The existence of a large number of these small farmers underscores the need for a greater level of extension service, which goes beyond technical extension relating to the dissemination of information on agro practices, but to marketing information and business facilitation. Farmers know how to farm, but often their earnings are limited because they operate at the primary production level.

The Government of Jamaica is therefore taking deliberate steps to organize farmers in clusters around basic processing facilities that add value to their primary production, and help them with marketing.

Mr. Chairman, our expanding tourism sector is a case in point. This represents a captive market for our farmers. However, without deliberate action and policies on the part of the State, rural people including farmers will not benefit from this expansion. We are therefore organising farmers to produce for these hotels with emphasis on quality and consistency of supply. In this regard, the provision of proper food health and safety infrastructure is critical.

The key to developing agriculture and raising rural incomes is to lift agricultural productivity, through modernization. For us, this modernization does not have to be sophisticated. A basic thing as introducing more productive tools can make a big difference. We need frankly to ban such low productivity tools as machete and hoes.

As a SIDS, Jamaica is susceptible to hurricanes and other extreme weather conditions. Nothing poses a greater threat to agriculture and rural development than natural disasters, as with each such disaster, farmers' livelihoods are wiped out, and they have to literally start over again. Within this context, sustainable agricultural insurance is paramount. We therefore commend to this CSD 16 forum the active consideration of sustainable agricultural insurance to help SIDS in their search for solutions.

Thank You.

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